

# CATHOLIC THEATRE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION  
of  
CATHOLIC THEATRE CONFERENCE

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## Standards for a Catholic Theatre

by Urban Nagle, O.P.

It is approaching the close of the second decade since a couple of dozen people talked, perhaps a bit brashly, about standards in the Catholic theatre, particularly in the United States, and out of those talks and exchanges of correspondence came the Catholic Theatre Conference. We were not the first in the world to do a bit of talking on the subject, for we have the records of some enthusiasts in the early twenties, and I suppose it popped up a few times in the plans and hopes of the producers and patrons of—say, *The Second Shepherd's Play*.

In our day we gathered in Chicago and Washington to learn a few things by asking a few questions and these ran along the lines of "Can't we do something about developing a Catholic theatre?" and "Is anybody doing Catholic theatre?" which in turn led those with an academic turn of mind to ask "What is Catholic theatre?" There was some humility seeking to learn the accomplishments of others (since we were for the most part strangers at the time) but we made demands in the academic and often scholastically tinged realms which most likely none of us were able to fulfill. And it so happened, as you might expect, that the theorists on one side and the mixers of glue on the other had differences of opinion. Fortunately, I think, neither phalanx had two dollars to rub together, so one could not buy out the other. And the discussion goes on. But it had an apparent freshness in those days.

The theologians gave rules of moral theology and some asked for an ecclesio-centric theatre. The Jacksonian Democrats got the translations from their head-sets and countered, "Say it with scripts." This brought forth such names as Calderon, Lope de Vega, Claudel, and the sharp answer became another question or series of them—"Who will pay to see them? . . . Who will even come to see them? . . . Who will produce them? . . . (and in some cases) Who will put them into English?"

We had some good producers there—the ensuing years have demonstrated that—but they didn't know what to look for. Some had been bitten by the contemptuous criticism of the arty set or had received thundering denunciations from

the consciously orthodox. We had a few good playwrights but they wanted to write for production and didn't know where to find the market if there was one. Broadway was a doorway for those with sufficient talent but it was asking a lot to suggest they write each script for two markets with different and sometimes opposed standards.

Remember, the parish audience wasn't too far removed from the minstrel and the St. Patrick's Day extravaganza, and that parish audience accounted for a large proportion of the potential customers for "Catholic theatre." Now while the leisurely evolution of the Catholic mind offers confidence in the stability of its thinking, and while the lack of inhibitions on Broadway along with the remembrance of "the torch-bearers" of the escapist twenties stuck up like highway crosses, some of the pioneers had found the parish audience terribly articulate and quick to run to authority, which usually means specialists in other fields, if anyone tried anything new or very old.

(Continued on page four)

Father Urban Nagle, O.P., S.T.L., Ph.D., attended Providence College, the Dominican House of Studies at River Forest, Ill., and House of Theology at Washington, and completed his graduate work in psychology at Catholic University. He taught at the latter institution and at his Alma Mater, founded the Blackfriars Guild in 1932 and directed Chapters at Providence, Washington, and New York—with time out for summer stock at Lowell, Mass., and Cliff Haven, N.Y.—and served as editor of THE HOLY NAME JOURNAL. Out of his editorial comments came an earlier book, UNCLE GEORGE AND UNCLE MALACHY. Among his plays are BARTER, CATHERINE THE VALIANT, SAVONAROLA, ARMOR OF LIGHT, ON THE SEVENTH DAY, LADY OF FATIMA, and CITY OF KINGS. The last received a Christopher Award for Drama in 1950.

# PROOF IS IN THE DOING

by ROBERT SMETT

Rochester Area Representative, CTC

There is no school of Catholic Theatre, not even in our own Catholic high schools, colleges and universities. Rather, Catholic Theatre is a school in itself and, at its highest point, may well be considered a 'school of sanctity.'

Catholic Theatre is "learned" by "doing" or "living." An easy smile is the religious life itself, where books, lectures and sage sayings may only lead to poetic daydreaming or develop a happy "do-gooder," but where the proof is in the doing.

Since theatre is an art, aimed at God, and by definition partaking of those divine attributes, Goodness, Beauty and Truth, it becomes a medium of direct approach to the God-head Itself and sainthood.

Denial of this will eventually end in a denial of God or a denial of His providential guardianship of and inspiration in the fine arts.

A Catholic high school or college whose science department promulgated the Darwinian theory of evolution, whose philosophy professors taught Marxism as a way of life, whose English department assigned book reports on Mickey Spillane would soon be condemned by Church and civic authorities alike as a travesty.

In the Catholic educational institution, science, philosophy, English and football are all taught with the God-end in view. Catholic education is God-conscious and completely immersed in the Divine as its final goal. In the long run, this is the only reason to attend a Catholic school.

If drama departments cannot match this challenge given to readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmatic, then they might as well call it a day and close shop.

If the senior play is not taken as a serious activity of the school, a public display of Catholic Theatre done with as much art and talent as the medium can possibly supply in the particular local confines, then somebody is wrong and many may pay.

The importance of the entertainment field in the everyday life of the layman cannot be overemphasized; it's universal influence in forming ideas and even regulating morality is tremendous—ask any Communist!

But if the insipid is passed as Truth, the inartistic offered as Beauty and the insidious given as the Good, then a Lucifer will be set free to pirouette on the proscenium.

The time has come for an examination of conscience. Are we going to continue to hand art-starved teenagers nothingness under glass? Will they pass along knowing nothing better than minstrel shows or non-royalty plays for nine girls in one setting?

Don't tell me they don't enjoy, can't appreciate, lack tal-

ent for, or just don't like "the better things." If they don't—it's your fault. "The better things" are better because they are good—if we can't make them exciting, attractive, a challenge (and nobody ever handled one better than our wonderful 1955 teenagers), then we had better start a chess club or go back to our stamp collections.

We can only give if we know. This is not child's play this soul-handling—it is a trust. If we fail, something beautiful is destroyed. It is our fault and ours only. Teenagers *never* fail—have you noticed?

## WELCOME MAT

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Sister Helen Daniel, S.S.J.<br>Nazareth College Drama Dept.<br>4245 East Avenue<br>Rochester 10, New York | Sacred Heart School<br>204 South 5th Street<br>Norfolk, Nebraska<br>Sister Charlene, O.S.F.             |
| Mrs. Adelaide Barnett<br>St. Agnes High School<br>1428 West Adams Blvd.<br>Los Angeles 7, Calif.          | Corinne Dallmer<br>2504 San Augustine Avenue<br>Laredo, Texas   |
| The Academy of the Visitation<br>St. Louis 12, Missouri   | Sister Mary Agnes, O.S.M.<br>1944 West High Street<br>Blue Island, Illinois                             |
| Sister Mary Daniel, C.S.J.<br>6400 Minnesota Avenue<br>St. Louis, Missouri                                | Sister Mary Terence, O.S.B.<br>Holy Trinity High School<br>Hartington, Nebraska                         |
| Gonzaga University<br>Lucile Lake<br>Spokane, Washington  | Aquinas St. Genesius Club<br>1127 Dewey Avenue<br>Rochester 13, N. Y.<br>Rev. J. Leonard Cullen, C.S.B. |
| Guardian Angels High School<br>Sr. Martin de Porres, O.S.F.<br>419 Decatur Street<br>West Point, Nebraska | Rev. Thomas Markos, C.S.C.<br>7655 Dempster Street<br>Niles, Illinois                                   |
| Xavier University Masque Society<br>Xavier University<br>John G. Maupin, Director<br>Cincinnati 7, Ohio   | St. John Fisher College<br>3690 East Avenue<br>Rochester, N. Y.<br>Mr. Michael Cosella                  |
| Emmanuel College<br>Boston, Massachusetts<br>Sister Catherine Edward                                      | Sister Mary Siena, R.S.M.<br>Salve Regina College<br>Ochre Point Avenue<br>Newport, Rhode Island        |

## WELCOME MAT (High School)

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|--|--|
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| Cascia Hall School<br>So. Yorkton<br>Tulsa, Oklahoma                     | Mother of Mercy High School<br>Cincinnati, Ohio  |
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| Notre Dame High School<br>320 East Ripa Avenue<br>St. Louis 23, Missouri | Nazareth Academy<br>La Grange, Illinois          |
|  | Academy of the Visitation<br>St. Louis, Missouri |

The first Sunday of each month is CTC Sunday. Will you give the conference and its needs a special remembrance in your Mass and Holy Communion on that Day?

## *St. Genesius muses:*

Isn't it about time for a new year? Tch, Tch! No hands on the clocks, no dates on the calendars! Well, I *should* be used to these innovations, for I've been here for centuries. Perhaps they aren't innovations, though. This is Heaven, where time is not—only a blessed Eternity. The innovations are down there on earth where all things are relative. Even time is there only a relationship with past or future. But a most significant relationship, if only those human folk down there in the vast theatre of the earth could realize it.

How small the stage looks from here! Yet, it seems magnificently large to them. How brief their play! If only they could understand the unimportance of the little fame, the little wealth it may bring them. How can I get a message through to all of them now upon the eve of a new year? I want them to make, or renew, their determination to recognize God as their Director, to perform the plays of their lives so as to glorify Him; I want them to develop an increasing awareness of His presence in the wings, out front, upstage. But how can I get this urgent message to the players? There isn't an angel messenger in sight—but of course not! What am I saying! But, wait! Suddenly it comes to me. There *IS* a way to spread my New Year message through the cast, from star to stage-hand. I'll write it out and send it fluttering down to the desk of the President of the Catholic Theatre Conference. She'll see that it gets into the Bulletin.

EDITOR'S NOTE: And that's just what he did. And just what she did. So, here 'tis.

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According to the Constitution of the Catholic Theatre Conference:

A "Life Member" is an individual who, having been a member of the Conference for three years continuously, has upon payment of a maximum fee or by a grant of honor been entered in perpetuity upon the rolls of membership.

Honorary "Life Memberships" are held by:

Sister Mary John, Saint Martin, Ohio  
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Margaret M. Passmore, New York City  
Mrs. Christopher Wyatt, New York City  
Therese Marie Cuny, Evanston, Illinois

Members who have been on the rolls of the Conference for the three years required may become life members by payment of the fee of \$200.00. They will be exempt from all future annual dues, and will have the rights and privileges of members in addition to being published as life members at least once a year.

St. Mary's Academy of Monroe, Michigan holds such a membership. In 1948 their zealous and Catholic-action minded director, Sister Margaret Mary, I.H.M., and the Chevron Players voted to donate the required fee as a contribution to the furtherance of Catholic Theatre.

We are indeed indebted to the Chevron Players, not only for the monetary contribution but for the kind of faith and generosity that offers inspiration to others.

## **SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIPS**

A "Sustaining Member" is an individual or a group, enrolled at an advanced fee, who desires no more than the privileges of ordinary membership while contributing more substantially to the support of the Conference.

Sustaining Memberships are held by:

Catholic Theatre Guild, Mobile, Alabama  
College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, N. Y.  
Immaculate Heart College, Hollywood, California  
Joseph F. Rice, Los Angeles, California  
School of Brown County Ursulines, Saint Martin, Ohio  
St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana  
Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, Purchase, N. Y.

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## ***Moppet Theatre***

The Children's Educational Theatre of Maryland, Inc., presented Charlotte Chorpennig's dramatization of **HANSEL AND GRETEL** at St. Mark's-On-The-Hill, 1620 Reisterstown Road, Pikesville, on Saturday, December 10 and Sunday, December 11. Three casts of children between the ages of 8 and 12 participated. The young actors were drawn from the groups that met at Pikesville and at the Bryn Mawr School. The production was under the direction of Frances Cary Bowen.



## Standards for a Catholic Theatre

(Continued from page one)

The school theatre offered room for improvement too. The grade schools were content to stick to their allegories and pageants, but the high schools were willing to depart from these suspenseless offerings and their interminable adolescent comedies, if anyone would teach them one tenth as much about theatre as they were learning about baseball and music. The colleges were showing signs of emergence from the classics and quasi-classics in which the quarterback played Ophelia or the Sodality President did a gloomy Dane surrounded by gloomier Danes. Not that they weren't still doing them but they didn't like them as much as the high school audiences liked everything, because they were learning from the baneful influence of movies and radio that these masterpieces had to be done pretty well to be palatable. But the most progressive colleges which were not legion were good-script-hungry and often stumbled because they had to tackle something from a limited choice. The pitifully few adult theatres had the same trouble on top of their dependence on pleasing audiences which could not be forced to attend by order of some superior or school official.

This situation brings to mind a kaleidoscopic mirage of dozens of other problems—production standards, budgets, director training, promotion, physical equipment, audience training—or maybe merely the creation of a general awareness, out of which these things might be built. But even if all these fell into our hands we still had the problem of scripts which always comes first.

Furthermore we knew where all these things could be found—from the American theatre around us. For this monstrous institution had worked out many of its technical problems and was making rapid improvement in others—in fact, in practically everything except scripts. There were deep underlying reasons for this deficiency in the thinking of the day, the business competition to which this art form was unduly subservient, etc., but these were not the immediate concern of the director or school superior who wanted to use the exciting old weapon of the Church to teach, edify, delight and inspire the people. He or she wanted a few good scripts. Any other approach was ultimately so much talk.

\* \* \* \* \*

This in a very sketchy way was what we talked about in the mid-thirties. What else was there to talk about beyond swapping experiences? We couldn't standardize production on any level because this depended on local conditions. Actually we had mostly actors, aspiring to the American Theatre and willing to take the rough with the smooth, some directors (either frustrated or very charitable actors) and some playwrights hoping to learn what Catholic theatre was and where they could peddle their wares.

Collectively we knew of hundreds of scripts in the broad theatre around us—many good, many bad. We wanted some-

one to tell us which were bad risks from an audience reaction, which were immoral, which were really good for our people and either challenges or models for ourselves. Not knowing where to find the information we told one another, or offered opinions, and as the years went by we began to tell a wider audience.

If the art-forms of the early twentieth century had hewn to scholastic principles they wouldn't have confused technique with morality or formal cause with final cause. But they very definitely didn't hew so they did confuse. We found some plays capably written but completely immoral in the opinion of anyone who thought in even primitive terms of right and wrong. We found innocuous hagiography which couldn't offend but was bound to bore because it was so amoral it might have substituted exclamation points for verbs. We were accepting the necessity of thinking along two separate lines—form or technique and morality.

To develop a code for classification we decided there were four types of plays from the standpoint of morality.

- (A) The very good ones: the sort you wanted everybody to see and do because of their very right teaching—if they qualified in technique.
- (B) Those about which you say, "There is nothing wrong with it from a moral viewpoint" but about which you don't care much except perhaps again from the angle of technique.
- (C) The controversial plays: (controversial in the proper sense of the word under the rules of basic morality and the guidance of the church). Broadway has a habit of giving us fairly acceptable material with a smirch here or a revolting glob of blasphemy there. Sometimes a line can be changed, a scene cut—with due respect to copyright protection both moral and legal. This class would be offered through the opinions of the best experts we could enlist for the task.
- (D) The objectionable plays from a Catholic standpoint.

(Continued on page fifteen)

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## PLAY SELECTION

The choice of a play must be as individual as the purchase of a dress or a suit. While the general lines of the garment are similar, ones budget and individual differences must determine the final choice. So it is with the selection of a play. I should like to be able to send you a list of plays that would fill your production schedule for the next year . . . but this just cannot be done. The available talent, the rehearsal schedule, the budget, the audience, the type of theatre and even the personal likes and dislikes of your principal or the pastor . . . all these things plus many others must be taken into consideration.

Since I cannot give you a list . . . and by the way C.T.C. provides an excellent one as does the National Forensic commission of NFCCS (available at Fournier Institute of Technology at Lemont, Ill.) . . . I should like to discuss a few ideas that might give a fresh approach to your play selection.

It is reasonable to presume that all of us are interested in Catholic Theatre or we would not be members of C.T.C. Let me go a step further and say that we are interested not only in Catholic but in Christocentric theatre—that theatre which is concerned not only with the goodness contained in the play selected, but also with a personal dedication through which the art leads directly to Christ.

### CHRISTOCENTRIC THEATRE

Do not think that this infers that all the heroines in Christocentric theatre must go to the cloister in the third act. God forbid. In Christocentric theatre, as in all theatre, there is room for the presentation of a wide variety of human experiences . . . joys and sorrows . . . entertainment ranging from farce to tragedy. We have all felt the high exaltation that follows upon the witnessing of a great tragedy . . . we need not here comment on the ennobling effects of such an experience. You may wonder how a light hearted comedy or a frothy farce is related to a religious concept of theatre. I won't attempt a profound explanation of the spiritual therapy of laughter, I shall simply quote one student's remark after the curtain closed on a riotously successful presentation of *TWELFTH NIGHT*: "Sister, I feel as if I love EVERYBODY!" It's no small contribution to human solidarity to develop that spirit of bonhomie in a couple of hours. And it doesn't take much reflection to see the relation between this effect and the Christian virtue of charity. Christocentric theatre, therefore, may present tragedy, comedy or farce without inconsistency, so long as these plays are sound artistically and philosophically.

*(Continued on page fifteen)*

# Cross Country Circuit

## COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

St. Benedict's College, St. Joseph, Minnesota, and St. John's College, Collegeville, Minnesota joined forces to present Arthur Miller's *THE CRUCIBLE* on December 9 and 11. Sister Coleman and Reverend Dominic Keller were the Directors.

\* \* \*

Aquinas Institute of Rochester presented the St. Genesius Club in *JANUARY THAW* on December 9 and 10. Reverend J. Leonard Cullen directed.

\* \* \*

This Christmas, Rochester's Nazareth College for Women presented the Nativity Play from the York Cycle on December 15. The play was under the direction of Mr. Allan Stambusky, Jr., instructor in speech and drama.

\* \* \*

Sacred Heart College, Wichita, Kansas, presented *BLITHE SPIRIT*, Noel Coward's hilarious comedy success, on November 16 and 17. Elvira S. Bumarski directed the production.

\* \* \*

The Dante Society of Rochester's major seminary, St. Bernard's, recently presented a private performance of Emmet Lavery's *THE FIRST LEGION*. A cultural organization, the Dante Society produces a full-length play every two years and sponsors lectures on literature and the arts throughout the school term. Director is the Reverend Robert F. McNamara, brother of Madeleine McNamara, nationally known actress-monologist.

\* \* \*

Good Counsel College, White Plains, New York, presented *THE VELVET GLOVE* on December 9 and 10.

\* \* \*

Polonius was puzzled, but scholars and audiences agree that William Shakespeare conceived one of the greatest—and most exciting—of tragedies in *HAMLET*, Catholic University's production to be given January 27-February 11.

\* \* \*

Regis College, Weston, Massachusetts, sponsored the C.U. Players in *KING LEAR* on October 10. *SEVEN NUNS AT LAS VEGAS* was presented on November 29 and *HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS* (an original) was presented on December 16.

\* \* \*

Anna Marie College Paxton, Massachusetts, staged the *SEVEN NUNS AT LAS VEGAS* on December 8 and 11. Sister Mary John of Carmel directed the group.

Father Leo Petit, M.S.C., sends word that their December 10 and 11 performances of Reginald Rose's *TWELVE ANGRY MEN* were the greatest successes to date. Father Petit directed the Seminarians of Sacred Heart Mission Seminary, Geneva, Illinois, in this production.

## COMMUNITY THEATRE

The Reverend George J. Schmitt, pastor of Rochester's Holy Family Church has his parish theatre group in rehearsal for George M. Cohan's *LITTLE JOHNNY JONES*, set for a pre-Christmas production. As a curate in another city parish, Father Schmitt first presented the Cohan musical 25 years ago from the author's own manuscript.

\* \* \*

For the fifth Christmas season, The Catholic Theatre of Rochester took two one-act plays to various diocesan and parochial groups of the area, according to Lawrence McVinnie, president. Offered this season were the Nativity Play from the Coventry Cycle and *THE GYPSY CHRISTMAS*. Directors are Frank Riesenberger and Miss Thelma Holmes.

\* \* \*

The Mobile Theatre Guild's January production is William Saroyan's classic masterpiece on humanity entitled *THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE*. It will be given January 11, 12, and 13.

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## HIGH SCHOOL

The Masque and Gavel Players of Mother of Mercy High School, Cincinnati, Ohio, gave four performances of **ROCKABYE BABY**, a three-act mystery-comedy by Marguerite Kreger Phillips, on November 4, 5, 6, and 7. Sister Mary Carlos, R.S.M., is director.

\* \* \*

Mt. St. Joseph Academy, Brighton, Massachusetts, presented **BETHLEHEM** by Lawrence Houaeman on December 17. Sister M. Gretchen directed.

\* \* \*

Matignon High School, Cambridge gave a "Choral Interpretation" of **THE WOMAN WRAPPED IN SILENCE** by J. Lynch on December 18. Sister M. Alicette, S.S.J., directed the presentation.

\* \* \*

Putnam Catholic Academy, Putnam, Connecticut, under the direction of Sister Elizabeth Helen, F.S.E., presented **SEVEN NUNS AT LAS VEGAS** on November 20. Sister Charles de Jesus, F.S.E., directed **ROMANCE OF THE WILLOW PATTERN** and a Christmas play, **THE EMPTY ROOM**.

\* \* \*

St. Xavier's Academy, Providence, Rhode Island, opened the current drama year with a presentation of Thornton Wilder's **PULLMAN CAR HIAWATHA**. It was presented on November 23. On December 16 they presented **AT THE FEET OF THE MADONNA**, a choric pageant.

\* \* \*

Alvernia High School, Chicago, is holding its annual Arts Festival on January 27, 28, and 29. The theme is based on the musical heritage of America entitled, "America Sings." The Senior Choral Readers under the direction of Anna Helen Reuter and the Senior Glee Club under the baton of Sister Leonette, O.S.F., will present the program. They will be assisted by the members of the ballet, directed by Frances Marceron.

\* \* \*

Providence High School (Chicago) produced **THE SAUSAGE MAKER'S INTEL RUDE** by Henri Gheon at the Chicago Drama Festival. The play received a Superior rating. Drama students are participating in the Christmas Cantata to be presented December 18. Therese Marie Cuny is director.

\* \* \*

Production of Paul Claudel's **TIDINGS BROUGHT TO MARY** (adaptation) brought a superior rating to Academy of Our Lady (Chicago). Therese Marie Cuny directed the production. Students will see the C.U. Players in **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING** in mid-December.

\* \* \*

Sister M. St. Gertrude, S.S.J., directed **ONE RED ROSE** by Sister Mary Olive, C.P., on December 20 at Nazareth Academy, Rochester's Catholic High School for girls.

The dramatic club of St. Teresa Academy, under the direction of Sister Mary Pius, AD.P.P.S., presented the play, **ST. FRANCIS AND THE CRIB AT GRECCIO** on December 11, 16, 18, and 20. The cast included 24 members of the club supported by 60 members of the Glee Club. The play concerned St. Francis Assisi who built the first crib to be reproduced for his people in Greccio, Italy.

—Norma Jean Travis

\* \* \*

This year, the senior class of Stanbrook Hall presented **SEVEN NUNS AT LAS VEGAS**, by Natalie White. Despite a major snowstorm, the auditorium was nearly packed with a fun-loving, appreciative audience.

Since any setting can be used, we placed our convent in Duluth at the Benedictine Motherhouse, St. Scholastica.

—Barbara Coughlin

\* \* \*

Immaculata Players, Immaculate Conception Academy, Dubuque, Iowa.

Activities commenced with an enthusiastic report by the delegates to the National Catholic Theater Conference at Notre Dame.

Fired with ambition, a membership drive was launched which resulted in a total number of ninety-two.

Seven "Automation Clubs" have been organized at the Academy, with the purpose of preparing for the time, when a three or four day work-week will become prominent as a result of automatic industry. The clubs are designed to aid the students to advance culturally to the point where they will spend their leisure time of the future in the Arts. The results of automation were discussed by Emmet Lavary in an address at the National Catholic Theater Conference Convention. The students devote one study period a week to reading and discussing the values of one-act plays.

—JoAnn Kretz

\* \* \*

The Chevron Players at the St. Mary Academy, Monroe, Michigan, have gone into rehearsal on **ONE FAMILY SINGS**.

Public expressions of gratitude are due Sister Francis Borgia, O.S.F., and Miss Anna Reuter of Alvernia High School for the perfectly-detailed script of such an excellent production.

—Nancy Cook, '56

\* \* \*

Immaculate Conception Academy in Davenport, Iowa, has been busy these early months of the scholastic year. In October the Seniors presented an original musical revue. The Sophomores followed with another original **DARE TO DREAM**—a foundress day program. The Juniors presented **LULLABY OF CHRISTMAS** on December 13 and 14. **TWELVE ANGRY WOMEN** will be the January production.

(Continued on page sixteen)

## THE ABC OF PLAYCRAFT

### Editor's Note:

The playwright, Alice Gerstenberg, needs no introduction to those interested in theatre. She is the author of such well-known plays as *OVERTONES*, *THE POT BOILER*, *THE UNSEEN*, *FOURTEEN*, *TIME FOR ROMANCE*, and many others. The material presented here was obtained from Miss Gerstenberg by Anna Helen Reuter during this past summer when it was Miss Reuter's happy experience to entertain the Dynamic Miss Gerstenberg at luncheon.

Has your play

Action	Names
Business	Order
Characterization	Paint
Dialogue	Quantity
Ethics	Ramp to a Climax
Familiarity	Scenario
Glamor	Technique
Human Interest	Utterance
Illusion	Vision
Jetsam	Wit
Keynote	X Appeal
License	Yield
Machination	Zest

### A

A stands for ACTION.

Has your play the kind of action that makes it essentially a *play*, not a novel, story, essay, preachment, movie scenario?

Your action cannot roam over the world as in a movie nor flow evenly on from day to day as in a novel; whatever your choice of time and place it must be packed, without obvious craftsmanship, into the limitations of time of performance and of stage space and equipment.

Is the action in your play *dramatic* action, is it conflict? If it is merely action and the explanations of action without counter-action and conflict, then your material is not dramatic in itself or you have not the dramatic slant to it.

Without opposition there is no play.

Whatever your main proposition, whatever the stand taken by your protagonist, there must be opponents in action, in dialogue, in characterization, in human interest, in machination. To defend your hero strongly and leave a villain undefended is to weaken suspense. Even though your sympathy must tip the favor of the audience to your hero, you must not be blind to the viewpoint of his enemies. The more omniscient you are in the interplay of character, of action and psychological reaction, the more intense the drama.

Action on the stage must be *shown* and not talked about.

What do the characters *do*?

If you were deaf would the sight of the action in pantomime satisfy you?

Is your action progressive? Has it a beginning which develops into a crisis and finishes logically?

Action is your foundation. When the building stands firmly you begin to decorate it. Sometimes you change the decoration after an audience has reacted to your play.

Allow the audience to suggest a change in decoration if it must but do not let it lay your corner-stone lest it also add the inscription of your obituary.

### B

B stands for BUSINESS.

Have you given sufficient thought to the "business," meaning variety of physical movement on the stage and variety of incident to add interest and charm to the bare foundation of your action?

The action of dramatic conflict may consist of the physical conflict of deeds or the emotionally mental processes of psychology presented dramatically, but business is the embroidery of the fundamental woof of the action.

Have you allowed your characters to make careless excuses for dropping the glove or letting the gun lie around just because you are too lazy to invent fresh tricks of business?

Are your scenes flat tasting as it were because you have not pepper and salted and spiced them up with business?

Has your observant eye translated to the stage the idiosyncrasies of character, the quaintness of some of our most every day habits, the telltale movements of emotion?

Great actors are creative enough to invent business or magnetic enough to sustain interest in themselves while doing nothing, but it is better to provide lesser players with legitimate reasons for keeping busy with their hands, for splitting up scenes or introducing any movement that would shift the audience eye from monotony of sight.

Business aids characterization, atmosphere, human interest.

Whereas action is the skeleton of your plot and characterization is flesh and blood, business can be clothing.

(Continued on page fourteen)

## NIA NORTHWESTERN THEATRE ASSOCIATES

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# Play Festivals

## C.T.C. PLAY FESTIVAL

St. Louis Area, December 2, 3, 4

The seventh annual Catholic Theatre Conference Play Festival was held at Webster College in Webster Groves, Missouri. Due to the large number of schools participating it was necessary to schedule the festival on three days, running six plays on Friday afternoon, eight on Saturday, and four on Sunday afternoon.

Mrs. Barbara Fraser and Mr. William Grisham acted as critic judges for all three days. Student actors received criticism and suggestions on acting following each play from Mrs. Fraser. Directing problems were handled by Mr. Grisham.

On Saturday, the directors of the participating schools met for a business meeting, and the students assembled in the Little Theatre to plan C.T.C. activities for the holidays.

Eighteen schools presented plays. This number was surpassed in one previous festival when nineteen schools took part, however at that time it was not necessary to be a member of the Catholic Theatre Conference to participate. The schools presenting a play at this time were: Nerinx Hall, St. Joseph Academy, Notre Dame Academy of Belleville, Illinois, Notre Dame High School of St. Louis, Missouri, Marquette High School, Alton Illinois, St. Teresa Academy of East St. Louis, Illinois, Incarnate Word Academy, Normandy, Missouri, Ursuline Academy, Bishop Du Bourg High School, St. Louis University High School, Mercy High School, Rosati-Kain High School, St. Peter's High School, St. Charles, Missouri, Visitation Academy, Christian Brothers College, St. Anthony High School, Xavier High School, St. Alphonsus High School.

St. Louis University High School's *Minor Miracle*, and *The Romancers* presented by Nerinx Hall tied for first place. *Twentieth Century* presented by Incarnate Word Academy placed second, and *Stained Glass* from Visitation Academy was judged third.

SR. M. CELESTINE, C.P.P.S.  
*Local Chairman, St. Louis Area*

## NORTH CENTRAL PLAY FESTIVAL

The Twin City Unit of the North Central Region of the Catholic Theatre Conference held its Eighth Annual Play Festival for the Catholic high schools of St. Paul and Minneapolis at St. Joseph's Academy, St. Paul, November 26. Nine Twin City schools participated.

Sister Irenaeus, C.S.J. host school director and festival chairman, opened the program by introducing The Reverend F. Marlin of Davenport, Iowa, Critic-Judge for the festival. Sister Laurent, C.S.J., Principal of the Academy expressed a warm welcome to all participants and guests, and extended the hospitality of St. Joseph's in the name of the management and faculty members, to all present.

The regional chairman, Sister M. Charitas, C.S.J., sited

the purposes of the festival, reviewed briefly its origin, and stressed the importance of a well governed, attentive *listening* audience.

Father Marlin analyzed and evaluated each play following its presentation with the ease, grace, and intelligent understanding of a past master well acquainted with the problems of the speech arts. Seldom, if ever, have festival enthusiasts received greater inspiration, more helpful suggestions or more professional technical assistance than did those who were so fortunate as to have been present at his hourly evaluations. The North Central Region made no mistake in its choice of Critic-Judge!

All who witnessed the plays were agreed that tremendous growth could be evidenced especially in choice of materials; with but a single instance, all offerings were fresh festival fare which was a welcome feature of the day's performances. Cast after cast showed much improvement in vocal and physical development as they presented their characterizations. Directors and students deserve much credit for work well executed. "Better speech through drama" has become a definite realization in our C.T.C. Unit which was initiated eight years ago at the Academy of the Holy Angels, Minneapolis, where it was held for four years under the chairmanship of Sister Charitas, C.S.J. Cretin High School, St. Paul, played host for three years with Brother William, F.S.C., festival chairman. This eighth annual at St. Joseph's Academy proves that festivals can travel from school to school and should be held in different areas to leaven the soil and spread its benefits.

Invitations are now in order for 1956. Who wants to play host to the next festival?

## SOUTH DAKOTA PLAY FESTIVAL

The South Dakota Catholic Play Festival for High Schools held its annual festival November 17 at St. Agatha High School, Howard, South Dakota with Sister M. Loyola, O.S.F. acting as local chairman, and Sister M. Judine, O.S.F. from St. Benedict High School, Chicago, as Critic-Judge. This festival was initiated seven years ago by the North Central Region of the Catholic Theatre Conference with Sister M. Jeannette of Mount Marty acting as field and local chairman and Sister M. Charitas, C.S.J. of Minneapolis doing the work of first Critic-Judge.

Next year the festival will return to its birth place, and enjoy the splendid appointments of the new Marion Auditorium of Mount Marty College, Yankton, South Dakota.

\* \* \* \* \*

The following schools participated in the November festival: St. Agatha's, Howard; St. Mary's, Salem; Mount Marty High, Yankton; Immaculate Conception, Stephan; Cathedral High, Sioux Falls; Presentation High, Aberdeen; St. Mary's, Dell Rapids; Notre Dame Academy, Mitchell; and St. Paul's, Marty.

# Strictly Teen

## The Tenth Biennial Catholic Theatre Conference Convention

by MARY CAMERON MOREHEAD, '56

Parkersburg Catholic High School, Parkersburg, West Virginia

It was our pleasure and privilege this past summer to attend the Catholic Theatre Conference held at the beautiful and historic University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. The Conference took place June twelfth through fifteenth.

Biennially, teachers and students throughout the United States come to see, direct and participate in the plays and demonstrations. The Convention requires a great deal of preparation as is apparent in the plays presented. A few of the committees charged with preparation of this Biennial Convention, 1955, were: Publicity, Exhibits, Arrangements, Registration, Program Planning, Publication and Social Activities. Every day, several activities were scheduled for various times, in order that the individual could choose the one that captures his interest.

The numerous presentations also gave visitors an opportunity to see the classrooms and various buildings. They were all wonderful to see, but the one that captured our interest was the new, ultra-modern Arts and Science building. A student art exhibit was held during the four day Convention. The art students' original creations were outstanding.

On Sunday, June twelfth, the preliminary activities were held. It included Drama Production Recordings and later, a wonderful new play by Natalie White entitled "Billion Dollar Saint." After the play, as after several others, an evaluation took place in which the merit of the play was discussed.

On Monday morning, June thirteenth, after the students and teachers had been assigned their respective student halls, the Conference formally opened with a Solemn High Mass in Sacred Heart Church. Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C., President of Notre Dame University, was the celebrant. That afternoon, the General Session came to order in the huge Drill Hall. During this, numerous addresses were presented and the Presidents' Report was given by Miss Therese Marie Cuny.

Later, the high school plays were presented. Afterward, the members were invited to St. Mary's College for a tour. That evening a psychological drama entitled "Hotel Universe" was presented by professional players from Rochester, N. Y. An evaluation followed.

On Tuesday, June fourteenth, numerous very good plays, demonstrations and lectures were given concerning various subjects from childrens theatres to Radio and Television discussions. Wednesday, June fifteenth: Business meeting, High School Plays, Lectures and an excellent play entitled "Every-

man." Early that evening a banquet was featured in the spacious East and West Dining Halls with the Rev. Urban Nagle, O.P., as toastmaster.

Afterwards, a beautiful, unforgettable Candlelight Procession formed near Knute Rockne Memorial and marched to Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto. I shall never forget that warm, starlit night and the hundreds of candles lighting the path to Our Lady. There, with hundreds of people kneeling and praying, Benediction was given. At the conclusion, many people remained, reluctant to leave the beautiful, restful scene.

Later, the students departed for their respective halls to prepare for the Mixer held in the mammoth drill hall. Thus concluded the Tenth Biennial National Convention of the Catholic Theatre Conference.

Since this was my first Theatre Conference, I learned much about the Catholic Theatre. The plays were outstanding and I am certain everyone there thought the same. I can sincerely say I am anticipating the next Catholic Theatre Conference. I am certain it will be as grand a success as the Tenth Biennial Convention.

Congratulations to Sister Margaret Mary, I.H.M., and the Chevron Players of Saint Mary Academy, Monroe, Michigan. The current edition of "Strictly Teen" is to be highly commended. For successive months please send material to the following: February, McDonell Memorial High School, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin; March, Dominican High, 9740 McKinney Ave., Detroit, Michigan; April, Catherine Pitz, Mercy High School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; May, Sister M. Generose, O.S.F., Immaculate Conception Academy, Dubuque, Iowa; June, Therese Travis, Saint Joseph's Academy, 355 Marshall Avenue, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

"For there is one basic principle in the design and decor of theatres: Nothing is really important except the performance on the stage. If the performance is exciting, the audience will not be aware of comfort, or of the building. If the performance is bad, all the comfort in the world will not bring an audience in to see it."

—(Brooks Atkinson in the *New York Times* magazine.)

## DRAMATIC "DITTLES"

or

### IN SHORT . . .

*Do Teen-agers want better plays?*

Yes, I am a teen-ager, and I say we do. We like light comedies, of course; but many of us also like plays with meaning to them. After a play we like to say more about a play than just "It was funny." When we see plays, even student plays, we want to see perfection. Mistakes may be funny, but not in a serious play.

—Sandra Guest, Grade 9

I will readily admit that there are some of us teen-agers who do not know what we want. This goes for "Whether or not we want better plays." Some, however, spoil things for others and give all of us a reputation we don't deserve. Some of us do know what we want . . . BETTER PLAYS!

—Ynda Kennedy, Grade 9

The active interest and participation in the discussions following the plays at the Notre Dame Convention was a proof positive that teen-agers want their plays to be PERFECT!

—Mary Christian La Brecque, Grade 10

Judging by the enthusiasm in evidence at Catholic Theatre Day at Marygrove College, Detroit, and realizing that this area is but a small part of the great whole, I think there is hope in the Youth of Today. We are interested in the better plays and eager to produce them with perfection.

—Kathleen Chalmers, Grade 10

I don't like a play that very subtly makes fun of teen-agers. It is much more interesting to put time on worth-while drama that will be interesting to a good audience and at the same time give the cast an opportunity to grow up mentally, physically and emotionally.

—Andrea de Vigan, Grade 9

Teen-agers of today want a challenge in everything we do. This goes for the type of play in which we wish to try out for a certain difficult role.

—Margaret Mary Kean, Grade 9

We want to be able to appreciate the fine arts. There must be a presentation and an education as to the best in music, sculpturing, poetry and painting. It follows that we must be guided and led toward the highest and best in the field of dramatic art.

—Sue Fallon, Grade 9

Integrate the study of drama and English more intensively.

—Mary Katharine Gainor, Grade 11

The Shakespearean Festival at Stratford is an example of what respect, yes, even reverence, for real "theatre" can produce. The Secret? Attention to details that seem irrelevant but produce marvelous results when it comes to handling 2000 strangers every day and night for over six weeks. No gaudy bill-boards; no smoking, eating nor drinking in the "tent"; and "on the trigger" (of the canon) punctuality. All groups of C.T.C. take notice!

—Mary Katharine Gainor, Grade 11

I am from South America. When I came to St. Mary's I could not speak English, but the study of Speech and Drama have helped me very much. I think reading a play helps us to learn and express the language we don't know.

—Tonia Gutierrez, Grade 11

## WHY DRAMATICS?

by PAULA JOHNSON, Grade 11

St. Mary Academy, Monroe, Michigan

"Why dramatics?"

Most high school students, I am sure, would answer this question by saying, "Just for fun!" Of course, I agree that there's loads of fun in dramatics, but this isn't all. If it were, then certainly dramatics wouldn't hold the place that it does in our high school curriculum, for we don't go to school "just for the fun of it."

Here, then are some of the other reasons why I think that students should take dramatics. . . .

It develops poise, voice training, team work, better knowledge of human nature, and keener appreciation of human affairs.

It gives a student a greater appreciation of the great works of drama.

It opens the eyes to the differences in kind, types and values of plays.

Students are alerted to look for the elements of surprise, suspense, conflict and contrast.

The appetite for keen intellectual pleasure is sharpened when student evaluation of a play measures up to what a famous critic-judge may have to say of it.

Never more does a feeling of boredom at a second (or even a first) showing of a play have to be ours, because we are taught to concentrate on some special phase of a production every time we view it, e.g. diction, facial expressions, gestures, grouping, costuming, exits, entrances, timing, lighting, staging, etc.

Perhaps one of the most convincing proofs that dramatics can be invaluable to us is the fact that we have heard former members of the Chevron Players say: "I'm certainly grateful that I took dramatics in high school!"



# I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER —

## Part I

by MARGARET POSA, Grade 12  
St. Mary Academy, Monroe, Michigan

Some people think that children don't remember things they see when they're young. In some cases this may be true, but I remember many from my childhood. Among these many incidents, some of the most important are the plays that Chevron Players enacted.

The first one I remember is the Centennial Pageant in 1945. I was in the first grade at the time and very active. It was my first appearance on stage in a scene called "Dreamland." I wore soft, silky, pink pajamas with dainty flowers. We each had our big bed-pillows and pretended to be sleeping on the stage, until a beautiful angel came and woke us. It isn't much, but it is a memory.

The next play I recall was "Our Hearts Were Young and Gay." The scenes took place on an ocean liner. Two girls were taking their first trip abroad and their mothers had both taken the precaution of giving purses to wear under their skirts so they wouldn't be in danger of losing or having their money stolen. In this particular scene they needed a tip for the porter who was patiently waiting at the door for his money. Neither of the girls could give it to him because they'd have to divulge their hiding-place to get it. Their embarrassment was hilarious. I think it was the hit scene of the play.

"The First Dance" featured a very proper society matron and five daughters of variable temperaments, the youngest being a little "tom-boy." The scenes were laid at the time when "bloomers" were first beginning to make their appearance. Mary Jo stole the show when she rushed in wearing a bright red turtle-necked sweater and full black bloomers. The consternation of "Mama" and her four very proper daughters can be easily visualized, too.

In "The Family Circle" we saw the trials and tribulations of Cornelia Otis Skinner, who wanted to become an actress in spite of all her father's objections. It was with mingled feelings of pity for Cornelia and rebellion toward her father that I watched him forcibly remove with soap, water and towel the make-up that she had put on.

"Cyrano de Bergerac!" What a name and what a production! It was absolutely wonderful. Lois was unforgettable as Cyrano and Marilyn was a beautiful Roxanne. No particular scene seems prominent in my memory, but it is probably because the whole thing was so well done. I know I'll never forget it.

Some of my classmates speak of "Annie Laurie," "The Family Tree," "Career Angel," and "Oh, Father!" but I can't. Doesn't that just prove we're all different and all do not remember the same things?

## Part II

by JANET COUSINO, Grade 12  
St. Mary Academy, Monroe, Michigan

I'll always remember the parts I've played in our high school plays, because each one of them—in some way or another—has become a part of "me." As a freshman, I sat in the third row when the curtain went up for "The Mikado" and felt just as excited and important as if I were playing the part of "Yum-Yum" herself. My name was on the program for "costumes." No, I hadn't created nor selected them, but I had pressed and pressed and re-pressed them. For this reason I was given the assignment of passing judgment on them from the audience point of view. It was my first experience with a real play, and I found out that work back-stage is often much more important than the acting itself.

Later that year, dressed in soft white choral robes, I was wide-eyed (and wide-mouthed) participator in the choruses for "The Nutcracker Suite." I learned that my responsibility as a member of the chorus toward the whole ensemble was as great as if I were performing on stage with the leading role.

Who would ever have thought that I would portray the part of a priest! My chance came during my sophomore year when we staged "All Things in Christ" (Pius X). Although my lines were very few, I worked hard that time trying to master a dignified, solemn, clerical air.

Holding the script for "The Clown Who Ran Away" was more than exciting; it was positively hilarious. I learned that the script girl must be ready for anything—especially when the main actor ad libs to cover up something. That time, I remember, the clown was supposed to sit on a suitcase and lament his sad state. When he sat down, however, the old, straw suit-case collapsed. This incident brought the house down (and sent me thumbing through pages to help the actor back to the main idea of the play.)

During my junior year, I was privileged to play St. Joseph in Father Lord's pageant, "Joy for the World." The spiritual impact of this production was tremendous. We intended it to be a tribute to Our Lady at the close of the Marian Year. All the cast caught the spirit of it and, judging by the audience re-action, sent it out across the foot-lights into the hearts of all who witnessed it.

As Hauviette in "Jeanne d'Arc" I was thrilled with the integration of drama, religion, history, French and art, three of these subjects being very important ones in my course.

*(Continued on next page)*

Production Sheet  
(By William J. Elsen, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana)

THE PLAY  
THE BILLION DOLLAR SAINT by Natalie E. White

THE DATA

Published by Genesian Press, Box 184, Notre Dame Indiana. Scripts, \$1.00. Royalty \$25 and \$15. Modern farce. One int. All male cast: 16 speaking roles and extras. Originally produced by the Department of Speech, University of Notre Dame: preview June 11, 1955 for the Alumni Reunion; premier June 12 for the Tenth Biennial Convention of the Catholic Theatre Conference; repeat June 17 for the Notre Dame Summer Session.

SYNOPSIS

Through a slight miscalculation, St. Francis of Assisi visits a Jesuit University instead of a Franciscan Monastery, wins the football team to his barefoot order, and before he converts a few Jesuits, inadvertently brings the University a billion dollar endowment.

DESCRIPTION

The play is a broad situation farce, with high comedy lines; yet under the humor are two themes, anti-materialism and anti-pride of learning. "Does a Ph.D. love God more than an M.A." asks St. Francis.

STAGING

The single set, the outer office of the President of a University in Kansas, should be convincingly realistic; it should also be a shallow set, preferably nine or ten feet and not more than twelve. The furniture and properties are readily procurable. Costuming presents no problem. Five Jesuit and one Franciscan cassocks are easily borrowed; the robes worn by the football players and the Saint can be made by anyone who can operate a sewing machine.

ACTING

Roles are played straight and fast. Acting problems are minimized by situations and lines which carry the show.

EVALUATION

"As in her play produced last (1954) summer, SEVEN NUNS AT LAS VEGAS, Miss White places a Catholic organization in an embarrassing situation and then lets it work out its own salvation. The situation in BILLION DOLLAR SAINT is wonderfully ludicrous . . . Nuns, priests and laymen found the play clever, sometimes biting in its satire, but always in good humor and highly entertaining."—Frank G. Schmidt in *The South Bend Tribune*.

I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER

(Continued from page twelve)

In this, my senior year, at Boys' Catholic Central, I played a "guest performance" of Essie, the ballet dancer, in "You Can't Take It With You." This gave me the experience of working under a different director and I realized the value of knowing the why's and wherefore's of the rules of the theatre. I also learned that no task is too difficult to attempt, because I who had never had a ballet lesson in my life, was, after hours and hours of practice, able to show some similarity to the "Dying Swan" when it came time for the curtain to go up on our first performance.

At the present time we are casting for roles in "One Family Sings." Whatever role I secure doesn't make too much difference to me because I know that there will be a lot of fun as well as much to learn in any part of it.

Whatever else I forget, I am sure that it won't be the happy memories that are a part of my high school dramatics.

"We want (in the theatre) characterization that is both complex and honest; language that is distinctive and revealing; narrative that digs deeply into human behavior. For a very long time now we tried legislating from the top down, with depressing results. It may profit us—even esthetically—to reverse gears and try for a "vulgar" popularity."

—(Walter Kerr in *Commonweal* magazine.)

**Next Month**

●  
**REPORT ON THE C.T.C.  
BOARD MEETING**

## THE A B C OF PLAYCRAFT

(Continued from page eight)

### C

C stands for CHARACTERIZATION.

Are your characters true to themselves or have you pulled the strings to make them mere puppets to expound a theory?

Unless you are writing fantasy or farce, where absurdity or quaintness is an end in itself, characters must live their own lives and speak their own thoughts or be banished from your cast.

Have you characters of contrasting types to give variety and color to your play?

Have you dragged in more characters than necessary?

Any character that does not aid the action or the atmosphere is superfluous.

Whether the action was motivated by the characters or the characters were searched for the author to suit the action, the result must have the illusion of life.

Have you defended your main character or is some minor character suddenly going to "run away with the show"?

If so, is your slant wrong?

Is your minor character the real lead?

Just where did you place your sympathy originally?

If you were not quite clear about it in your own mind, the characters if true, will soon set you right. Do not fight them.

It is better to run away and rewrite another day.

Descriptions *about* your characters belong in novels. No amount of stage direction to the actor or producer can make up for lack of proof in characteristic dialogue and business. What cannot be *shown through* dialogue, action and business may as well be left unwritten.

### D

D stands for DIALOGUE.

Poetry and prose use long sentences, long paragraphs, even pages of uninterrupted speech.

If drama is to have its own individuality, and production the illusion of volatile and plastic life, speech should be interrupted before it becomes an harangue.

One need not make despotic rules that each character should have one line only to say at a time, but the dialogue should be like a game of tennis where the ball of conversation is batted back and forth by equally skillful players. Sometimes, a leisurely back and forth over the net, sometimes, more fiercely slamming from a distance, sometimes a tricky undercut, sometimes a suave return, sometimes an absolute bang into the net (which might be a very telling line just before the fall of the curtain).

Visualize it as you please, the only way to play the game is to bat the ball, the only way to write the play is to use batting dialogue.

As this dialogue progresses, there slips into the consciousness of the audience the development of the plot, the characterization, the setting, the thousand and one items you must let them know.

Not once must it be apparent that you are making an *effort* to give information. The audience must not hear *you* through the dialogue. They must hear only the characters who must tell the story as if they, too, are unconscious of telling it. The characters must give the impression of not knowing the end until the end strikes them.

The audience, although intrigued to remain through suspense and interested curiosity, does as the play progresses see all the elements unfolding and does and wants to prognosticate what the end is to be, but the characters are until the last unconscious of their fate.

### E

E stands for ETHICS.

Are you true to yourself?

Are you honest about the source of your play? Has its creation been influenced by legitimate promptings from yourself and your sub-conscious mind or have you knowingly encroached upon the work of others?

Has your play sincerity? Have you revered what is sacred or have you cheapened yourself by slurring it for the sake of the extra laugh which may lure the extra dollar? Comedy and satire have excellent ways of sloughing off the sentimental tarnishings of emotion, they are many times better weapons than tragedy, but be sure it is comedy and not just an exercise in trying to see how many ash cans may be collected out of the alley.

Ethics is the science of duty. Duty is respect, regard, recognition of what is due others; what is due oneself!

A play is privileged to exist for entertainment alone, if that entertainment is within the canons of taste in the sense of being sincere amusement no matter how farcically funny.

There is more enduring quality in the play that has hidden within it some searching revelation of life which will make the spectators include in memory the effect of that emotional experience.

Through a playwright's vision an audience can glimpse new problems and will go out of the theatre carrying, subconsciously, higher ideals, better aspirations.

(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH.)

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New!

## One Family Sings

A Two-Act Play with Music  
Based on The Story of the Trapp Family Singers  
by Maria Augusta Trapp

Adapted by Sister M. Francis Borgia, O.S.F.

This play enjoyed a most successful premier performance at Alvernia High School, Chicago, Illinois, under the direction of Anna Helen Reuter.

ROW, PETERSON & COMPANY  
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## Standards for a Catholic Theatre

*(Continued from page four)*

In a different classification (that of technique), we thought of asking our reviewers (from secular and religious papers) to choose

- (1) the really good plays.
- (2) the harmless: the great bulk of innocuous ones which might correspond to the bulk of western films; those indeterminate scripts about which we say, "It was all right."
- (3) the plays about which much has been said from a production standpoint or the acting demands; the ones we thought good but had bad audience reactions; in fine the plays about which we were forever warning one another with specific reasons and pointers.
- (4) the plays that were simply badly written.

So, a play would be doubly classified as A-1 or B-4 or C-3.

The Conference set to work on this plan and invested a great amount of time with some very satisfying results—but the task is something like writing an encyclopedia. There are thousands and thousands of plays in print (or which were in print and might be found). There are hundreds more which well served a particular need and which might be resurrected and printed or mimeographed for like situations.

Over the years I have received hundreds of letters asking advice on play selection. The Conference has surely received thousands. I didn't know the answers in a great many cases and the Conference can't have known the answers in all cases. So this old dream recurs of having a sort of standard work (not official because we are not a censorship organization and have no mandate) of collected opinions about as many plays as we can find.

When I said that the Conference has made a good start, I meant that a few people at different times did big jobs but it is still on the surface. Some evaluations have been lost; some differ in format or approach. This is just too big for any small group of people unless they were subsidized and that is not the most likely happening.

This is the practical (or impractical) suggestion with which I must close. Are enough college drama departments or other qualified members willing to evaluate some plays each year, according to definite standards in connection with Play Appreciation courses or for any reason at all?

If you would notify the Conference, something might be started in the not too distant future. Someone should tell all our ever-harassed directors (perhaps including you) what to produce, and it might as well be the Conference (including you?).

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*When ordering from our advertisers, be sure to mention Catholic Theatre Conference.*

## PLAY DIRECTION

*(Continued from page five)*

### DEFINITION OF CATHOLIC PLAY

This brings us to the problem of the selection of plays for Christocentric Theatre . . . to the definition in other words, of a Catholic play. A play is Catholic if it is philosophically sound; if it treats evil as evil and good as good; and if it conforms to artistic principles, such as restraint and proportion.

So broad a definition would seem to make the problem of play selection relatively simple. You know that this is not true. The problem of play selection is one of the most crucial of all the difficulties facing the director today.

Few good plays are being written today and these few, for the most part aim to please the taste of the Broadway theatre-goes; hardly representative of the great American public or the audience that comes to view drama in our schools. The off Broadway director is faced with a practical dilemma. If he selects for production a successful Broadway show, he will have the advantage of the favorable publicity it has received. But he is likely to find that the central situation is unpalatable for his audience and unsuitable for a Christocentric production schedule.

### USING THE RED PENCIL

Sometimes it is possible to take a popular hit and red pencil objectionable lines. Again the director faces a problem. If he succeeds in changing what he feels he *must* reject, he runs the danger of censure from Catholic critics who are unaware of the changes he has made. We faced such a problem in a production of Thornton Wilder's *OUR TOWN*. We felt that this play had much to offer to our actors and our audience. The story line is good, family life is presented in a favorable manner. The absence of scenery offers a challenge to the technical staff. However, at the opening of the third act, the Stage manager philosophizes in a somewhat naturalistic and pantheistic vein. A few changes in this one speech made the play acceptable.

If the popular Broadway play is notably immoral the Catholic director faces a more serious problem. Even if he succeeds in cutting objectionable passages he may give scandal through his production of the show since all who hear that he is producing it will not see the play. He places himself, too, in the dubious position of taking advantage of publicity for a show whose main story line he cannot condone.

Further, the director who elects a Broadway show is committed, in some way, to competing with the Broadway presentation of it: a feat manifestly impossible since he has usually, only a moderate budget and a relatively inexperienced cast and production staff. Some Broadway hits are sufficiently wide in interest to warrant re-doing, on a smaller scale, in the community or school theatre. But the off-Broadway di-

*(Continued on next page)*

## CROSS COUNTRY CIRCUIT

(Continued from page seven)

THE IVORY DOOR, a romantic fantasy by A. A. Milne was presented by the Sock and Buskin Drama Club of McDonnell Memorial High School, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. The production, given early in December, was directed by Sister M. Susan, S.S.N.D.

\* \* \*

In Omaha, Nebraska, Mercy High School entered the sixth annual Creighton Prep Speech Meet, and won the first place trophy. Mercy, a new school this year is a combination of St. John and St. Mary Schools. Ribbon winners were Peggy Crawford, second in original oratory and first in extemporaneous speaking; Mary Kay Walsh, first in Newscasting; Kathleen Kisicki, second in Prepared Oratory; Dolores Schiratti, third in Dramatic Declamation; Kathleen McMahon, third in Poetry Reading. Mercy is now making plans for their Christmas Program.

\* \* \*

The Genesians under the direction of Sister Mary Edward, C.S.J., presented their first one-act play, SO WONDERFUL IN WHITE, at St. Joseph's Academy in Green Bay, Wisconsin, during Thanksgiving week. The Genesians presented the choric pageant, AT THE FEET OF THE MADONNA, as a part of the Academy Glee Club Christmas Concert. Sister Mary Laurent, C.S.J., directed the Glee Club and Sister Mary Edward, C.S.J., prepared the speaking choir.

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FOR ALL MEN — or — FOR ALL WOMEN

*The new play*

**TWELVE ANGRY MEN**

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**TWELVE ANGRY WOMEN**

It looks like an open and shut case of "guilty" until one juror begins asking pointed questions. Then as the tension mounts, they become—twelve angry jurors! This play was first produced on television with a cast that included Franchot Tone, Edward Arnold, John Beal, Robert Cummins, and other leading stars. (Obviously the play contains many excellent roles.) It received the Television Arts and Sciences Award as the best dramatic writing of the year. With just a few alterations, it was found, the same play could be done by an all-woman cast. Accordingly it is available in two versions, the cast either 15 men or 15 women. There is just one set—the jury room. Playbooks are 85¢. The royalty is \$35.00.

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## PLAY DIRECTION

(Continued from page fifteen)

rector will do well not to take all his cues from the Great White Way. If he does, he cuts himself off from experimentation . . . and experimentation is the lifeblood of the artistic creation.

The director who is willing to take a chance or two may actually produce a play that he or one of his players has written. Or he may elect to do an older play in a new and different manner.

## ACTORS AND PLAY SELECTION

So far I have talked about plays selected with a view to the method of production. For a moment let us consider the actors in the plays and talk of the selection of plays as it concerns them. Most of the students in school drama have no notion of going into theatre professionally. Their interest is rather in the training theatre gives; they want to learn poise, to acquire the ability to meet others and to talk with ease, to develop grace and charm. All this is very good as far as it goes . . . but there's the flaw. That is just as far as it does go in many cases. Too few drama directors seem aware that while these skills are important, there is another more important and far reaching aim . . . that of building character through drama. The director with the Christocentric point of view will not be content with merely embellishing their personalities! In the process of directing growth in others he inevitably grows himself in Christ-centredness. The high school drama director is dealing with amateurs too young to realize what amateurs they are. He must work with them during their leisure hours . . . and it doesn't take him long to realize that his work is their play. He has to *make* them work . . . but keep them liking it. He has to develop in these youngsters at a highly competitive age, in a highly competitive activity, the virtues of charity, simplicity and humility . . . and of industry and punctuality as well. He has to teach his "stars" to shine with modesty and his spear holders to grasp their weapons through ten rehearsals even though they are "knuckle-perfect" after the first 15 minutes. He learns that few prima donnas are more temperamental than a high school Juliet and few Broadway critics more devastating than the boys in the front row at Senior High.

The high school drama director must keep in mind that the success of this particular production is less important than that the lady's maid should learn to control her jealousy of the heroine, and that the heroine should be willing to do behind scenes chores in the next performance. Actors can be exploited, just as athletes have been and with equally disastrous results. The young people to be in the play *must* be considered in the problem of play selection.

Al Hirschfeld says that theatre is the most ulcer producing institution in history. He was speaking of professional theatre, but had he known education theatre he would underscore the statement several times.

